

REMARKS

The Official Action of September 18, 2006, in which prosecution on the merits has been closed in accordance with the provisions of *Ex parte Quayle*, has been carefully reviewed. Claims 1 and 2 remain in the case, and these claims have been **allowed**, i.e. they are deemed by the PTO to meet all requirements for patentability including the requirements of novelty and non-obviousness under §§102 and 103.

The drawing has been accepted, and the PTO has acknowledged receipt of applicants' papers filed under Section 119.

The claims have been objected to as including reference characters not enclosed within parentheses. The objection is respectfully traversed.

MPEP 608.01(m) states as follows with respect to reference characters, after stating that such reference characters may be included in the claims:

The reference characters, however, **should be** enclosed within parentheses so as to avoid confusion with other numbers or characters which may appear in the claims. [emphasis added]

As can be seen, MPEP 608.01(m) does not **require** the use of parentheses.

Nevertheless, in deference to the examiner's views and to avoid needless argument, the reference characters have been deleted. In any event, the presence of such reference characters

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has no effect on the scope of the claims, per the very next sentence in MPEP 608.01(m):

The use of reference characters is to be considered as having no effect on the scope of the claims.

Regardless, the issue is now resolved. Withdrawal of the objection is in order and respectfully requested.

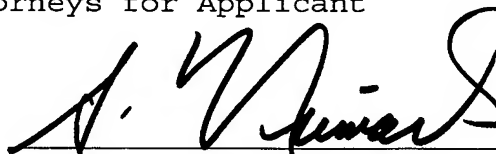
The prior art documents of record and not relied upon by the PTO have been noted, along with the implication that such documents are deemed by the PTO to be insufficiently material to warrant their application against any of applicants' claims.

Applicants believe that all issues raised in the Official Action have been addressed above in a manner that should lead to patentability of the present application. Favorable consideration and early formal allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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